

MAR 18 1966

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A letter from the PUBLISHER

Benjamin M. Ouer

AS World War II ground to a halt, the Red armies and the Kremlin's commissars swept into Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea, gobbled up half a continent and more than 100 million people. This week, 21 years and a new generation later, TIME takes its readers behind the no-longer-so-impenetrable Iron Curtain for a revealing appraisal in word and picture of what the years have wrought in the four major and strikingly diverse countries of the area: Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Principal reporter on the story was William Rademaekers, who covered the Hungarian uprising ten years ago, has since been based in Bonn, Washington and Rome, and next week will open our Eastern Europe bureau in Budapest. His fluency in Hungarian and German and his knowledge of Italian and Spanish should serve him well there. For the cover story, he made three trips to Rumania and Hungary, two to Czechoslovakia and one to Poland. Of course he was not alone on the story. Managing Editor Otto Fuehringer, in the company of Old East European Hand Jim Bell (who now runs the New York bureau), last fall interviewed their way through three of the countries. Writer Robert Jones was in Eastern Europe this winter, and Researcher Julie Adams stopped there last summer. Senior Editor Peter Bird Martin, our man in charge of color projects, spent nine days scouting picture possibilities in the area, took 300 himself and wrote the shooting script for Photographer Jerry Cooke. Talkative in Russian, German and French, Cooke worked his way through five weeks of shooting in the four countries, took nearly all of the pictures that appear in the color section.

Except for some rather obvious



RADEMAEKERS IN RUMANIA

police shadowing that had to be put up with in Rumania, our people suffered no pressures, were allowed to work freely for the most part. Perhaps the worst experience they encountered was that old Balkan bugaboo of night driving with the lights now off, now on. The trick is to switch the lights off and use those of the approaching car. Trouble is that the approaching car is playing the same game and, as Rademaekers recalls, "cars roll blindly at each other for sickening seconds before flicking their lights on again."

One warm discovery was that, even after two decades of Communist propaganda, the people on the whole are friendly to Americans. "I have a sister in Cleveland," a Rumanian farmer said to Rademaekers. "Please send her my love." "America," mused a Hungarian boy. "That is a nice word." "Are you an American?" asked an elderly Pole at a party. "Then let me hug you."



COOKE IN CZECH CANDY PLANT